



## Meeting Summary March 9, 2016

### Attendance

#### Panel Members:

Don Taylor, Vice Chair  
Phil Engelke  
Bob Gorman  
Sujit Mishra  
Julie Wilson

#### DPZ Staff:

Kristin O'Connor, Randy Clay, Lisa Kenney

### Two Merriweather - #16-05

#### Owner/Developer:

The Howard Hughes Corporation (The Howard Research and Development Corporation)

#### Architect:

Gensler & Associates

#### Landscape Architect:

LSG Landscape Architecture

#### Engineer:

Gutschick Little & Weber, P.A.

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor opened the meeting at 7:30pm, calling for introductions of the Panel, staff and Project team.
2. **Review of Two Merriweather – #16 -05** – Mr. John Dewolf, Vice President of The Howard Research and Development Corporation (HRD), provided a brief overview of the Site Development Plan (SDP-15-068). Phase I development had previously been reviewed by the DAP and is currently under construction. The SDP is now being resubmitted with Phase II development, which includes a mixed-use commercial building and modified site design.

Mr. David Dymond, the project's architect from Gensler, presented the project. The current site design is an outgrowth of the Crescent Neighborhood Area I master planning initiative originated by Design Collective, Inc. and has evolved through the project design team: Gensler, Gutschick, Little & Weber, P.A, LSG Landscape Architecture, WB Engineers + Consultants and Carroll Engineering, Inc. Mr. Dymond referenced the Crescent Neighborhood's Design Guidelines, which identify four development areas interspersed among environmental areas creating a network of paths, trails and public amenity spaces. The subject area (Area I) is under construction with Building A to the north and parking garage to the west of the proposed Two Merriweather site. The site's layout exposes the building to nature to the east. Site grades allow the design of an upper north plaza separating both buildings while allowing each to share the same elevation. Lower grades to the south introduce a plaza concourse level while exposing multiple floors

above running north-to-south. The two buildings are connected by a central stair walkway that steps and expands with the grade change before terminating on a lower south plaza. The walk adjoins a bio-retention area designed to receive storm water from the garage located along the western edge of the site. Mr. Dymond described the site's design as it relates to the vision for Downtown Columbia as a healthy setting for live, work play, learn experiences. Two Merriweather's site design responds to market trends while aligning with the principles of place making and acknowledges community comments on shared amenities and outdoor spaces. The Howard Hughes Corporation has engaged the design team to create a design in keeping with the millennial-generational culture. The building's architecture consists of three bars or zones: a work zone with sit/stand workstations facing preserved nature to the east; social amenity zone to the west side facing and incorporating the public plaza below; and collaborative zone connecting the two and acting as a permeable filter.

As a "build to suit" project, the master plan's building footprint has grown in response to client programming needs. Taking this into consideration, the west elevation is recessed at the first floor lobby level and main entrance off the vestibule. As the grade steps down, the lobby level extends through an outdoor terrace running along the west elevation and continues along the south. Retail space is accommodated within the lobby level and lower concourse level below along Divided Sky Lane. The projecting west elevation has been setback to provide additional area for the lower plaza. Loading/service is located on the east off a secondary street. Recessed doors, with loading dock underneath the building, minimize disruption to the pedestrian circulation.

Elevations are organized using a combination of three material zones – precast spandrels with window wall, curtain wall and a porcelain tile base. The different systems provide consistency with design guideline glazing ratios. Fin screening elements, as well as the west elevation's canted treatment, provide east/west shading. Mr. Dymond provided further detail on materiality and the functional application of each zone to the building's elevations.

The site design includes a two-fold strategy for accommodating ADA access. Primary access to Two Merriweather is provided via sidewalks with an additional accessible route more inclusive with the design of the bio-retention/natural area. A switchback design enables access instead of stairs while creating opportunities for seating and immersive experiences with the site's environmental amenity. The project's wayfinding system includes building identification, directory and pedestrian/vehicular signage consistent with the neighborhood guidelines. Bike storage is located at both the upper and lower elevations of the site with additional storage located in the garage. Pockets of seating are integrated with the plaza design and additional stormwater bio-retention features are located both curbside and internally throughout the site.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor directed staff to present its comments on the project. Mr. Randy Clay, DPZ, provided a brief summary acknowledging the applicant's response to concerns regarding the ADA strategy and further integration of the site's internal spaces. He noted that the applicant had described the relationship between Building A and Building B (Two Merriweather), but had not addressed the relationship between Building B and parking garage. Mr. Clay stated that in prior review of the site plan, staff had given instruction to the project team to further evaluate the garage's east elevation for potentially introducing an artistic and/or green treatment similar to the design approach followed with the west elevation. Mr. Clay stated that the architectural arrangement of Building B's social activity facing the garage emphasizes the need to resolve the dialogue between each structure and the site's internal amenity area. Staff requested that this be reflected in the DAP's recommendations.

DAP members engaged the applicant in discussion. Mr. Don Taylor expressed enthusiasm about the project overall and the design response to the ADA accessibility issue. He raised concern over the treatment of the west elevation, specifically noting the smooth blending of precast panel with curtain wall, which then abruptly ends in the transition to the south elevation. Mr. Taylor asks if consideration was given to introducing a similar "kick out" with the south elevation to receive the precast treatment. The project's architect responded that the intent was to create an illusion that the concrete slab edges were guiding back behind and piercing through the curtain wall plane to the south elevation as it would in a rectilinear form. Mr. Taylor followed up further explaining the abruptness of the treatment and that a similar kick would create a point to the building corner that would make it more dominant and allow for the curtain wall to

transition back to the precast to be repeated. Clarification was asked about the lobby terrace being open to the public. The vice president of HRD responded that the terrace is public space and the tenant would occupy the second floor and above. The intent is to attract a retailer that will stimulate and activate the space.

DAP member Bob Gorman echoed the sentiments previously expressed on the project overall. Mr. Gorman commented on the bio-swale/terrace steps area and suggested that once a person is on the boardwalk, they are committed. He acknowledged the fact that the site has grade issues, but stated that it would be nice if there was a way to get back to the stair landing other than at the end points. He suggested that at the southern end, where there's room and no interference with the bio-swale function, that there should be a way to extend the lower terrace into the landscape as another seating area. Mr. Gorman suggested using the same decking as the boardwalk as an interesting alternative to seating in the landscape as opposed to in the traffic way. Mr. Gorman's comments then turned to the stair and landing wall. He wondered if any thought was given to softening the mass of the wall with a green treatment such as vines. Mr. Gorman suggested that the roof presents an opportunity for the tenant in creating occupiable space along with the green roof.

DAP member Ms. Julie Wilson also commented positively on the project overall but shared the previous sentiments regarding the elevations noting the need for screening for solar reasons. She stated that while the north elevation is exciting, the south would more likely need screening and may require further massaging to make it as exciting as the other half of the building. In response to the question of mitigating heat gain on the southern exposure, the architect responded that the elevation features a two-foot overhang as a shelf. He noted that only in the east and west elevations are the fins being rotated for solar performance and they flatten out where they don't perform. Ms. Wilson further commented on the need to see the garage elevation with the dynamics of the plaza. The vice president of HRD responded that the intent is to come forward with additional study of the design.

DAP member Mr. Sujit Mishra commented on the prominence of the plaza element between buildings noting the need for something more to address the entrance and to respect the plaza. He stated that the green roof takes the project in a sustainable direction; however, in looking at the north elevation, where the fins are being applied and the west elevation where the curtain wall is placed, the design begins to contradict itself. Mr. Mishra suggested that the elevations could apply more solar measures. He also agreed with comments offered on further study of the south elevation. The architect clarified that the north elevation is only a continued expression of the adjoining elevations and the fins are utilized for aesthetic reasons and not for solar purposes. He stated that additional solar studies are being performed but preliminary studies have led to kinking the southwestern edge to mitigate full exposure and conceal itself while allowing the curtain wall to express the corner's prominence. Mr. Taylor commented on the relationship of the building to the garage adding that in late afternoon the building would be in full shade.

DAP member Mr. Phil Engelke expressed enthusiasm over the building's sculptural form and use of angles to create a strong feature. His remarks extended to the dynamic treatment of the internal space. With respect to the garage, Mr. Engelke commented that a previous review focused on the west elevation and a kinetic, artistic treatment. However, the east elevation is the side that needs to stand out, according to Mr. Engelke. He commented that it should be dynamic and green, thus enhancing the building's sculptural qualities. He added that different periods of the day will create interplays between both buildings, creating a greater dynamic with overlays of light. With respect to wayfinding, Mr. Engelke commented on the need for going heavier on directory signage in the southeast corner of the site to help navigation between the office workers, retail patrons, and visitors to Merriweather Post.

Mr. Gorman reflected further on the garage's east elevation commenting that it would be a long time before the plantings will have much impact on the building. He stressed the importance of the landscape architecture in terms of what trees are being planted, their growth rates and character. Mr. Gorman stated that their exposure to sun will have a significant impact so it's important that the right material goes in to do well and lend to the façade's attractiveness. He stated that attention should be given to the scale, size and quality of materials so the rhythm would create an impact.

Ms. Natalya Basumallick, the project's engineer from Gutschick Little & Weber, P.A., provided clarification that the bioretention area will allow water to infiltrate and would only retain water and cascade during storm events. Ms. Wilson reflected further on ADA access and asked if there was an option to navigate the site without having to use the ramping system. The architect clarified that the sidewalk system would act as the primary ADA access.

**The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board for consideration during its project review.**

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

1. "That the applicant reconsider the south façade and see if there's a way of integrating the precast element with the curtain wall in a better fashion." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

2. "As you get further into design development of the open space, the bio-swale area and stair, that you consider some additional seating areas that punch out from the central stairway landings or lower level, to create an opportunity for people to sit within the landscape and to think about what the landscape materials are and how you might mitigate the one wall, if there is an opportunity to do that." Seconded DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP member Sujit Mishra made the following motion:

3. "The applicant think about the main entrance and how it's related to the main plaza, and how it's more focused, and then study more the solar orientation and how it's affecting the overall glass façade." Seconded by DAP member Bob Gorman.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

DAP member Phil Engelke made the following motion:

4. "That as you're developing your wayfinding strategy you consider a 360 approach, that maybe not today, but very quickly, people will be coming into this project from all sides and it would be good to consider that now." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 5-0 to approve

### **3. Other Business and Informational Items**

Kristin O'Connor, DPZ, provided DAP members with copy of the DAP Rules of Procedure amended in February 2016.

### **4. Call to Adjourn**

Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 8:28 pm.